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(54) **Reverse seal**

(57) An improved dual lip radial shaft seal (200) is disclosed. The free end (36) of the dual lip seal (200) extends toward the air side (8) of the seal. Optionally, the dual lip seal has an oil side excluder lip seal (50), an

air side dust excluder lip seal (60), and an elastomeric static seal (24) extending from the elastomeric portion of the dual lip seal (100). A unitized seal version is also disclosed with two embodiments.

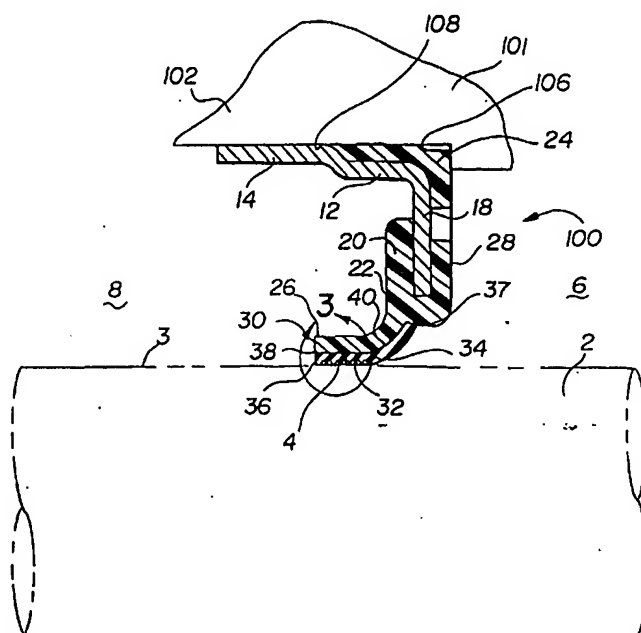


Fig-2

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates in general to fluid seals for use in sealing a rotating shaft member. More particularly, the invention relates to an improved radial lip shaft seal of the type having an elastomeric body bonded to a metal case in which the contacting surface of the lip is made of polytetrafluoroethylene, and a method of making the radial lip shaft seal into unitized seals.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] There are already in existence various types of radial lip seals, some of which use polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) for at least one of the lips. However, all of the known designs have the free end of the radial lip facing the oil side of the sealed region. This makes it very difficult to install onto radial shafts, necessitating the use of special fixtures and special assembly precautions to assemble such seals on radial shafts so as not to nick or damage the surface of the PTFE material and destroy the functionality of the seals. This is because fluoroplastic materials are very susceptible to nicking or other surface damage which compromises their ability to seal effectively.

[0002] A seal failure is very critical in modern seal mechanisms even though the seal itself may cost relatively little. However, the damage potential in event of seal failure is large especially where the seal is located in an inaccessible location as is common in many modern compact and complex machines. In order to overcome such problems the prior art has taught of using materials that are resistant to wear and nicking but which themselves are relatively hard. These wear resistant materials tend to cut grooves or damage the finish in associated shafts causing problems requiring eventual replacement. Therefore, there has been an increasing need for a radial lip seal that can be installed on radial shafts without the use of complex fixtures or assembly procedures.

[0003] There has also been found a need for so-called unitized seals, that is, seals which incorporate both the seal and the sealed against element or wear sleeve element. The seal and the wear sleeve elements are combined into a single assembly or "unitized". By preassembling these elements together, proper dimensional installation is achieved, protection against nicking or other damage during handling is avoided, prelubrication, if desired, may be insured, and correct dimensional tolerances may be controlled at the point where the seal is manufactured as opposed to the point at which the other parts are manufactured or assembled.

[0004] None of the prior art patents teach a solution to this problem.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] These and other objects and features of the invention will become apparent from the description and especially taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings illustrating the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] The various advantages of the present invention will become apparent to one skilled in the art upon reading the following specification and by reference to the drawings which include:

Figure 1 is a partial cross-sectional view of the preferred embodiment of the seal according to the present invention;

Figure 2 is a partial cross-sectional view of the preferred embodiment of the seal installed on a shaft; Figure 3 is an enlarged view of the preferred embodiment seal ring in circle 3 of Figure 2;

Figure 4 is an enlarged view of a first optional embodiment of the end facing the air side of the composite body in circle 3 of Figure 2;

Figure 5 is an enlarged view of a second optional embodiment of the end facing the air side of the composite body in circle 3 of Figure 2;

Figure 6 is an enlarged view of a third optional embodiment of the seal ring in circle 3 of Figure 2;

Figure 7 is a partial cross-sectional view of the first alternate embodiment of the seal;

Figure 8 is a partial cross-sectional view of the first alternate embodiment of the seal installed on a shaft;

Figure 9 is an enlarged view in circle 6 of Figure 5;

Figure 10 is a partial cross-sectional view of the second alternate embodiment of the seal according to the present invention;

Figure 11 is a partial cross-sectional view of the second alternate embodiment of the seal installed on a shaft;

Figure 12 is an enlarged view in circle 12 of Figure 11;

Figure 13 is a cross-sectional view of the first embodiment of a unitized seal according to the present invention; and

Figure 14 is an enlarged view of the first embodiment of the unitized seal in circle 14 in Figure 13;

Figure 15 is an enlarged view of an optional sealing groove of the unitized seal in Figure 13 in circle 14 in Figure 13;

Figure 16 is an enlarged view of an optional static seal of the unitized seal in Figure 13 in circle 14 in Figure 13; and

Figure 17 is a cross-sectional view of the second embodiment of a unitized seal according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0007] The seal according to the present invention has a seal band on the principal seal element which is in fluid tight sealing contact with a wear surface on a radial shaft or the like. The wear surface is disposed radially inwardly of the principal seal element. The invention applies equally to seals wherein these elements are reversed, that is, the sealing element is urged radially outwardly against a seal wear flange that is disposed radially outwardly of the principal seal element. It will also be understood that the invention applies equally to seals with unitizing elements wherein the wear sleeve element is located on a rotary shaft or the like disposed radially inwardly of the principal seal element or wherein the elements are reversed, that is, with the seal band of the primary seal element is urged radially outwardly against a seal companion flange or unitizing element which is disposed radially outwardly of it.

[0008] Referring now to the drawings, Figure 1 shows the preferred embodiment of the seal 100 assembly made according to the invention as molded, that is, as the seal 100 is formed and it is removed from a molding press. The elastomeric seal 100 is molded either by compression, transfer, or injection molding or a combination of them or the like.

[0009] The seal 100 includes a steel case 10, an elastomeric seal body generally designated 20 molded to the casing 10, a longitudinal portion 14 offset from the first portion 12 and a generally perpendicular leg portion 18. The seal body 20 includes a bonding portion 22, a static seal portion 24 formed in the offset portion 14 of the case 10, a primary or principal seal ring 30 and an intermediate or connecting body portion 28 lying between the leg portion 18 and the peripheral seal ring 30.

[0010] The case 10 may be a radial retainer or preferably an L-shaped case which has a first longitudinal extending portion 12, a second longitudinal portion 14 offset from the first portion 12 and a generally perpendicular leg portion 18. The side of the seal lying to the right of the illustrated figures is known as the "oil side" or "sealed region", whereas the portion of the seal lying to the left of the figures is referred to as the "air side". Thus, when the seal 100 is assembled to the shaft 2 as shown in Figure 2, the region shown as 6 is the enclosed or sealed region or the oil side, while the region shown as 8, lies outside the sealed region or the air side. If the case is a radial retainer, it is preferable to bond the primary seal ring 30 to the retainer. The retainer or L-shaped case may be made from steel, aluminum or plastic or any similar materials.

[0011] As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the peripheral seal ring 30 has a spiral ridge 32 formed on the sealing surface 34 to pump any oil that migrates along the periphery 3 of the shaft 2 from the sealed region 6. The seal surface 34 is in sealing contact with the wear surface 4 of the shaft 2. The seal ring 30 is preferably made

from a lubricous material such as fluorocarbon polymeric resin material such as Teflon® which is a trademark of DuPont. Alternatively, the fluorocarbon polymeric resin may be made from Hostaflon™ which is a trademark of Dyneon.

[0012] The seal ring 30 is chemically bonded to the elastomeric body portion 28 by conventional means. The elastomer body portion 28 may be a thermoset rubber such as fluorocarbon, polyacrylate, nitrile, hydrogenated nitrile or silicone or the like or a suitable thermoplastic elastomer. Thus, the seal 100 has a composite body 40 made from a seal ring 30 and an elastomeric, force applying element 26 with a common inner diameter cylindrical surface 38. The force applying elastomeric element portion 26 of the connecting body portion 28 extends from one end 36 to the other end 37 of the seal ring 30. The one end 36 of the seal ring 30 extends toward the air side 8. Optionally, the force applying elastomeric element 26 may extend past the one end 36 of the seal ring 30 to form a static sealing element 29 which rubs against the wear surface 4 of the radial shaft 2 as shown in Figure 4. Alternatively, a circumferential gap 31 may be formed between the one end 36 and the static sealing element as shown in Figure 5. The static sealing element 29 assists in excluding contaminants as well as provides a static seal against the shaft 2 during an air leak test.

[0013] Returning back to Figures 2 and 3, the spiral ridge 32 in the sealing surface 34 is in the form of a helix that is oriented to pump fluid basic to the oil side. Thus, the helix moves any oil that migrates along the shaft which is trapped by the spiral ridge, and moves the oil back along the shaft to the sealed region. Optionally, for increased exclusion of dirt, the spiral ridge may be tapered 33 as shown in Figure 6.

[0014] Figures 7-9 show the first alternate embodiment of the seal according to the present invention which is designated by the numeral 200. The seal 200 includes in addition to the elements described previously in the preferred embodiment whose numerals remain the same, an oil side excluder lip 50 that extends from the connecting body portion 28 of the seal body 20. The excluder lip 50 has an end 52 that rubs against the wear surface 4 on the periphery 3 of the shaft 2. The excluder lip 50 initially functions to provide a static seal against the shaft 2 during the pressure check phase of a powertrain or machine assembly plant quality procedure employed by many original equipment manufacturers. During the normal operation of the seal 200, the excluder lip 50 has a second function, that is, the end 52 rubs against the wear surface 4 on the periphery 3 of the shaft 2 to exclude or prevent oil contaminants from migrating along the shaft 2 towards the seal ring 30 and the interface between the seal surface 34 of the primary seal ring 30 and the wear surface 4.

[0015] The first alternate embodiment of the seal 200 may optionally have a dust excluder 60 that extends toward the air side 8. The dust excluder 60 extends from

the connecting body portion 28 of the sealing body to rub against the slinger member 70. The slinger member 70 is L-shaped and has an axially extending portion 72 which is mounted on the periphery 3 of the shaft 2 for rotation therewith. The slinger member 70 also has a radial extending portion 74 which extends from the shaft and has a wear surface 76. The tip 62 of the dust excluder 60 rubs against the wear surface 76 to prevent dirt or any other contaminant from migrating from the air side 8 of the seal to the interface of the wear surface 4 and the seal surface 34. Exposing the seal ring 30 to contaminants such as dirt could cause premature wear or damage to the sealing surface of primary seal ring 30. The dust excluder 60 has a convoluted shape 68 to enhance the rubbing force of the tip 62 against the wear surface 76 and to apply additional bias to the force applying elastomeric element portion 26 onto the seal ring 30 as shown in Figures 8 and 9. Those skilled in the art will recognize that the shape of the dirt excluder lip may take many configurations in order to optimize the design for the specific sealing application requirements and its configuration is not limited to any one shape or configuration.

[0016] The second alternate embodiment of the seal according to the present invention is designated by the numeral 300 is shown in Figures 10-12. The seal 300 includes, in addition to the elements described in the preferred embodiment whose numerals remain the same including, an oil side excluder lip 50 as previously described, a dirt or dust excluder 80. In this second alternate embodiment, the dust excluder 80 rubs up against an S-shaped slinger member 90. The slinger 90 has an axially extending portion 92 which is mounted on the periphery 3 of the shaft 2 for rotation therewith. The slinger 90 also has a radial portion 94 that extends from the axial portion 92. A longitudinal portion 96 extends from the radial portion 94 and extends parallel to the rotation of the shaft 2 toward the sealed region 6. The longitudinal portion 96 has a wear surface 98 that rubs against the lip 82 of the dust excluder 80. As with the first alternate embodiment of the seal 200, the shape of the dust excluder 80 may take on many configurations in order to meet the application requirements of the seal and is not limited to any one shape or configuration. The dirt excluder 80 has a bias to extend radially from the shaft 2 but the wear surface 98 of the S-shaped slinger does not permit the radial dirt excluder 80 to extend to its full radial length. Thus, a greater rubbing force of the tip 82 against the wear surface 98 is created by this configuration and the elastomeric properties of the rubber plus an additional bias to the force applying elastomeric portion 26 onto the seal ring 30.

[0017] The seals according to the present invention, described in the preferred, first, or second alternative embodiments are installed in place within a machine assembly 101. As shown in Figures 2, 8, and 11 the machine assembly 101 includes a housing 102 or the like having an opening 104 through which extends a rotary

shaft 2 having an exterior surface portion 5. A counter bore 106 is formed in the interior diameter opening in the housing 102. In the preferred, first, or second embodiments, the seal body 20 is installed onto the shaft 2 so that the one end 36 of the primary seal ring 30 extends away from the sealed region 6 and towards the air side region which is outside the sealed region 8. The case 10 is inserted into the counter bore 106 so that the static seal portion 24 engages the surface 108 of the bore 104 of the housing 102.

[0018] When using the first alternate embodiment which includes an oil side excluder 50 with the seal 200, prior to sliding the one end 36 onto the shaft 2, care must be taken to orient the tip 62 around the shaft 2 and toward the sealed region 6. After the primary seal ring 30 engages the shaft 2, the seal 100 is inserted into the counter bore 106 as described above in the seal 100 of the preferred embodiment.

[0019] When using the slinger member 70 in conjunction with the seal 200, as shown in the first alternative embodiment, the member 70 is mounted on the shaft 2 and the slinger member 70 is moved axially along the shaft 2 toward the sealed region 6 until the tip 62 engages the wear surface 76. In all other aspects the operation of the first alternative embodiment is the same as the seal 100 of the preferred embodiment.

[0020] Similarly, when slinger member 90 is used in conjunction with seal 300 and is mounted on shaft 2 as shown in the second alternative embodiment, the member 90 is moved axially along the shaft 2 toward the sealed region 6 until the tip 82 engages the wear surface 98 of the S-shaped slinger 90. In all other aspects the operation of the second alternative embodiment seal 300 is the same as the seal 100 of the preferred embodiment.

[0021] Another two embodiments of the present invention of a seal according to the invention are seals which have two elements that after being assembled are "unitized" and held together for cooperative sealing. The unitized seal, as shown in the embodiments in Figures 13 - 17, has two major parts that rotate relative to each other. Both seals can be installed in place within the machine assembly 101 which includes a housing 102, with an opening 104 through which extends a rotary shaft 2 having an exterior surface portion 5. A counter bore 106 forms the interior diameter opening in the housing 102. The specific details of the construction of both unitized seals are discussed in detail below. In these two embodiments, a primary seal is formed on one part and a wear sleeve surface is formed on the other part. The two parts are "unitized" or "assembled" together.

[0022] Referring to Figures 13 - 16, the first embodiment of the unitized seal 400 is made according to the present invention. As stated earlier, the seal 400 has two major components. The first major component is a seal element generally designated by the numeral 130 and the second is a component that includes a one-piece unitizing casing, generally designated by numeral

170.

[0023] The primary seal element 130 includes a one-piece primary seal case 132 having an axially extending, cylindrical mounting flange portion 134 and a radially intumed flange portion 136. In between the cylindrical portion 134 and the radial portion 136, there is an axially extending offset portion 138. At the end of the axially extending cylindrical mounting flange portion 134 is a radially intumed portion 135.

[0024] The "oil side" of the seal or the sealed region is designated by the numeral 306, whereas the "air side" or exterior region is designated by the numeral 308.

[0025] The primary seal element 130 also includes an elastomeric seal body 120, an intermediate or connecting body portion 122, a static seal portion 124 formed on the offset portion 138 of the case 132, and a primary or peripheral seal element 150. The intermediate body portion 122 between static seal portion 124 and the primary seal 150. The primary seal element 150 also includes a primary seal ring 148 which is made from a lubricous material such as PTFE one such material is Teflon® which is a trademark of DuPont. Alternatively, a PTFE material is Hastafion™ which is a trademark of Dyneon, or any similar polymeric material. The primary seal ring 148 has a sealing band sleeve portion 152 that is chemically bonded to the elastomeric body 120 by conventional means. Thus, the primary seal element 150 forms a composite body 154 made from a fluorocarbon resin sleeve portion element 152 or the like and an elastomeric force applying element 128. The elastomer may be a thermoset rubber such as fluorocarbon, polyacrylate, nitrile, hydrogenated nitrile, or silicone or the like or a suitable thermoplastic elastomer. The seal 150 includes the elastomeric ring portion 126 and the sealing ring 148. The portion 126 and ring 148 which are bonded together to form the composite body 154 and have a common interfacial surface 158. One end 156 of the composite body extends away from the oil side 306. The seal ring 148 rubs against the wear surface 174 on the unitizing casing 170.

[0026] The connecting body portion 122 of the elastomeric seal body 120 is bonded to the end 137 of the radially intumed flange portion 136 of the primary seal case 132. The static seal portion 124 extends from the connecting body portion 122 and is bonded to the axially extending offset portion 138. The static seal portion 124 may optionally have at least one sealing rib molded thereon. The force applying elastomeric element 126 of the composite body 154 acts to provide a radial force on the primary sealing element 150. A spiral ridge 146 is formed on the ring 148. The ridge 146 is in the form of a helix that is oriented to pump the fluid back to the oil side as shown in Figure 14. Thus, any oil or other material that migrates along the shaft toward the outside 308 of the sealed region, will be trapped by the spiral ridge and moved axially toward the sealed region 306. Optionally, the ring 148 may have tapered ridges 144 as shown in Figure 15.

[0027] Returning to Figure 13, the unitizing casing 170 is made from a rigid material such as steel or the like, and includes a central, generally cylindrical portion 172 that has an axially extending wear sleeve portion 174. The wear sleeve portion 174 has a properly finished wear surface 176, and at one end an offset portion 178 axially extending toward the oil side 306 with a properly finished wear surface 179, a radially extending portion 180 at the opposite end and a axially extending offset portion 181. A radially extending offset portion 182 is connected to portion 181 and has a properly finished wear surface 183 and terminates at the end 184.

[0028] The end 184 extends radially beyond the radially intumed portion 135 of the primary seal case 132. Those skilled in the art will recognize that as the primary seal element 130 is assembled to the unitizing case 170, the end 135 is folded radially to overlay the end 184 so as to form a unitized or complete seal assembly 400.

[0029] The elastomeric seal body 120 may optionally include an internal excluder lip seal 118 or an external excluder lip seal 114 or both seals 114 and 118 extend from the force applying elastomeric element 128. Both seals 114, 118 extend from the connecting body portion 122 of the elastomeric seal body 120. The internal excluder lip seal 118 has an appendage that extends radially and has a tip 119 that rubs against the wear surface 179 of the offset portion 178. The external excluder lip seal 114 also extends from the connecting body portion 122 of the elastomeric seal body 120 and has a tip 115 that rubs against the wear surface 183 of the radially extending offset portion 182. An optional extension of the force applying elastomeric element 128 extends past the one end 156 of the seal ring 150 to form a static sealing element 129 which rubs against the wear surface of the wear sleeve portion 174 as shown in Figure 16.

[0030] The internal excluder lip seal 118 prevents contaminants in the sealed region 306 from migrating along the shaft toward the seal sleeve portion 140. The internal excluder protects the seal sleeve portions and increases the life of the sealing band 150.

[0031] The external excluder lip seal 114 functions to prevent dirt, moisture, or other contaminants from migrating externally to the seal sleeve portion. The external excluder lip 114 protects the seal sleeve portion from premature wear due to dirt contamination and increases the life of the sealing band 150. In all other aspects the seal 400 operates as the seal 100 described earlier.

[0032] A second embodiment of the unitized seal is shown in Figure 17 and is designated with the numeral 500. In this embodiment, the seal element 130 is the same as previously described in seal 200 and the one-piece unitizing casing 270 has a central axially extending cylindrical portion 272, a wear sleeve portion 274 with a surface that has a properly finished wear surface 276, an axially extending offset portion 278 with a wear surface 279 at one end. At the other end the casing 270 has a radially extending portion 280, and an axially ex-

tending portion 282 extending from the radial portion 280. The axially extending portion 282 is generally parallel to the wear sleeve portion 274 and terminates at an end 284 which extends radially away from the shaft. The axially extending portion 282 also has a wear surface 285 with a surface that is properly treated. 5

[0033] The tip 115 of the external excluder 114 rubs against the wear surface 285 of the axially extending portion 282. This configuration reduces the radial force exerted by the force applying element onto the seal ring 150. In all other aspects, the second embodiment of the unitized seal 500 operates like the seal 400. 10

[0034] While the invention has been described in connection with a preferred embodiment and several alternative embodiments, it will be understood that it is not intended to limit the invention to those embodiments only. On the contrary, it is intended to cover all alternative modifications and equivalents that may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims. 15 20

Claims

1. A shaft seal for sealing against a rotating shaft to prevent the migration of fluid from an oil side to an air side, said shaft seal comprising: 25

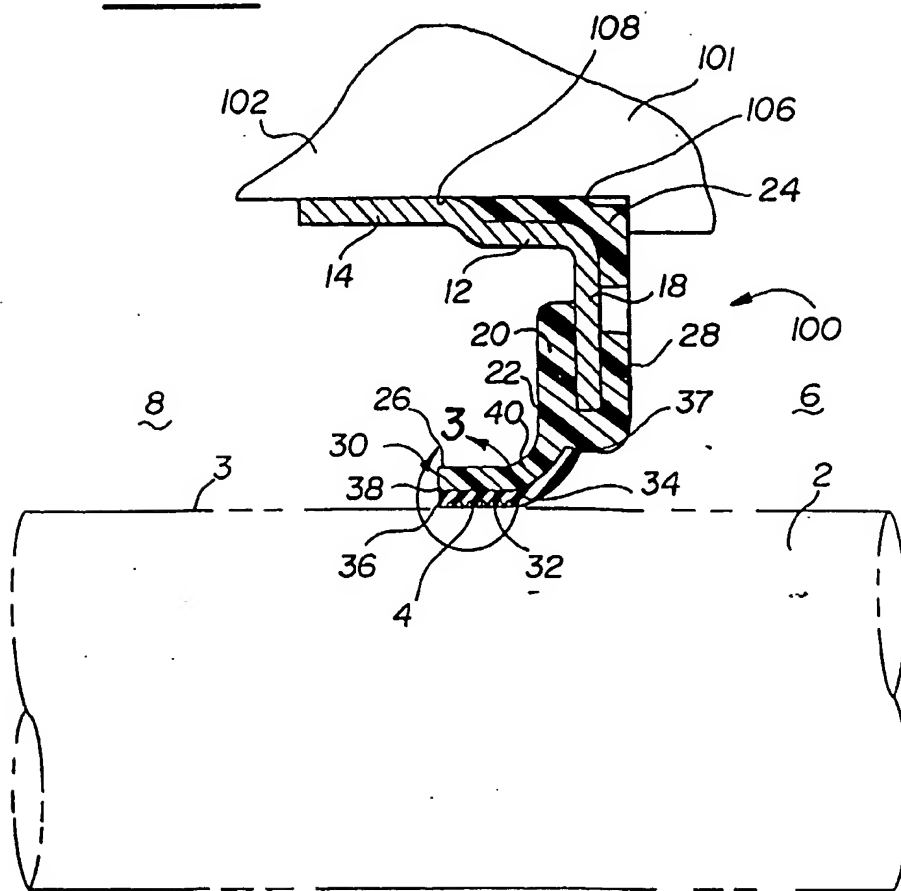
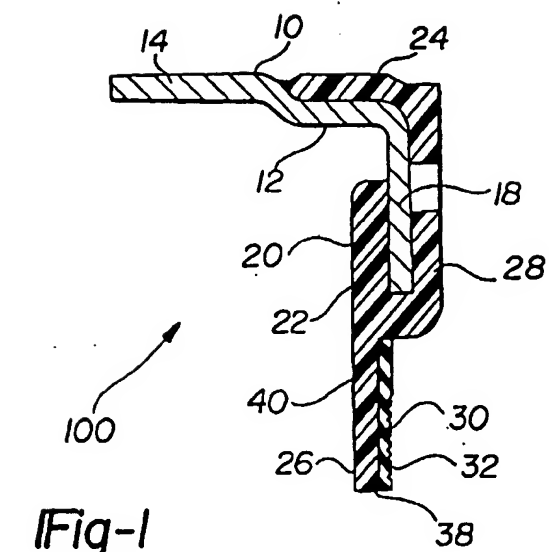
a case member;
an elastomeric seal body adjacent said case member, said elastomeric seal body having an intermediate body portion and a bonding portion;
a primary seal ring attached to said bonding portion, said primary seal ring having one end in sealing contact with the shaft, said one end extending toward the air side to prevent the migration of fluid from the oil side to the air side. 30 35 40

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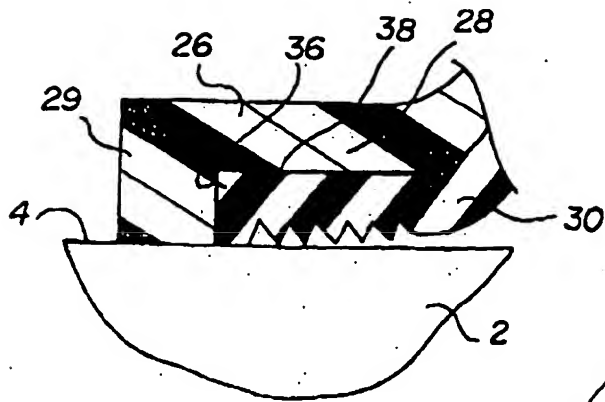


Fig-4

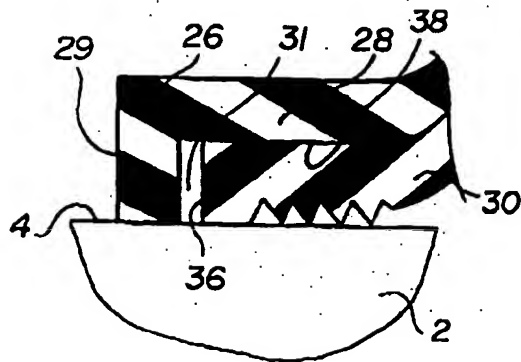


Fig-5

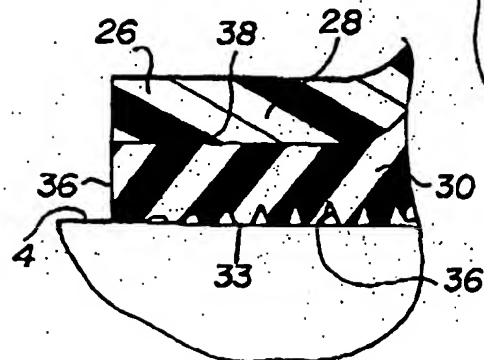


Fig-6

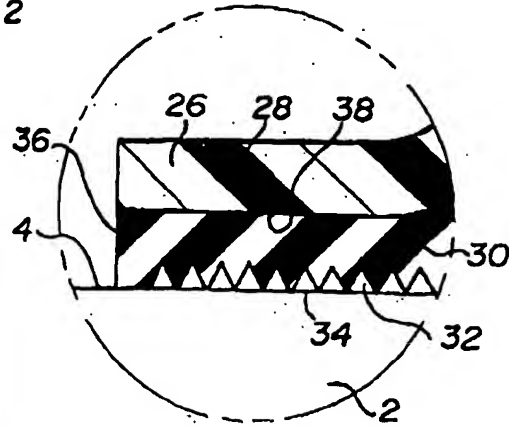


Fig-3

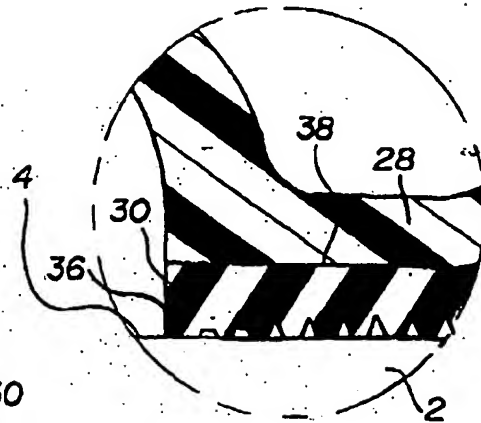


Fig-9

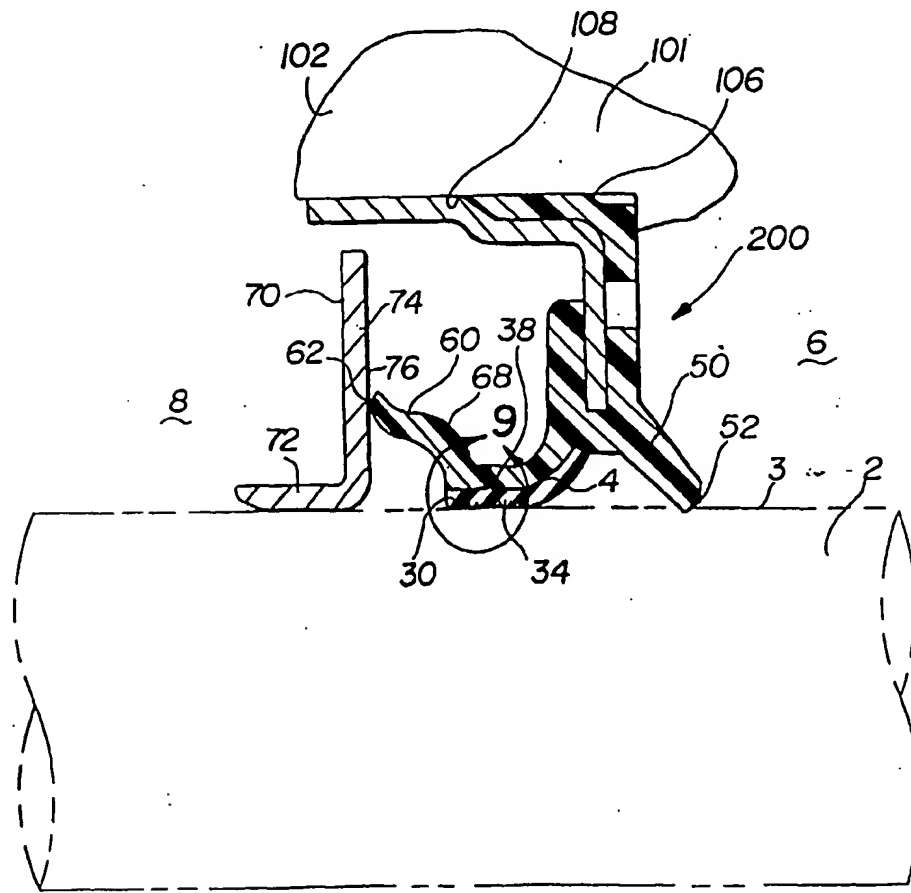
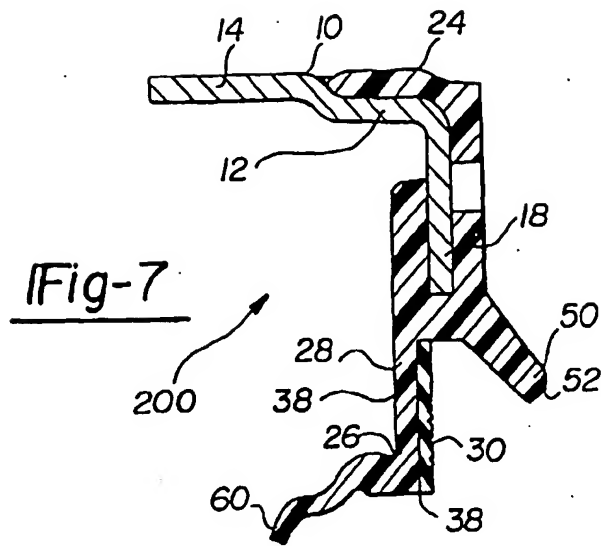
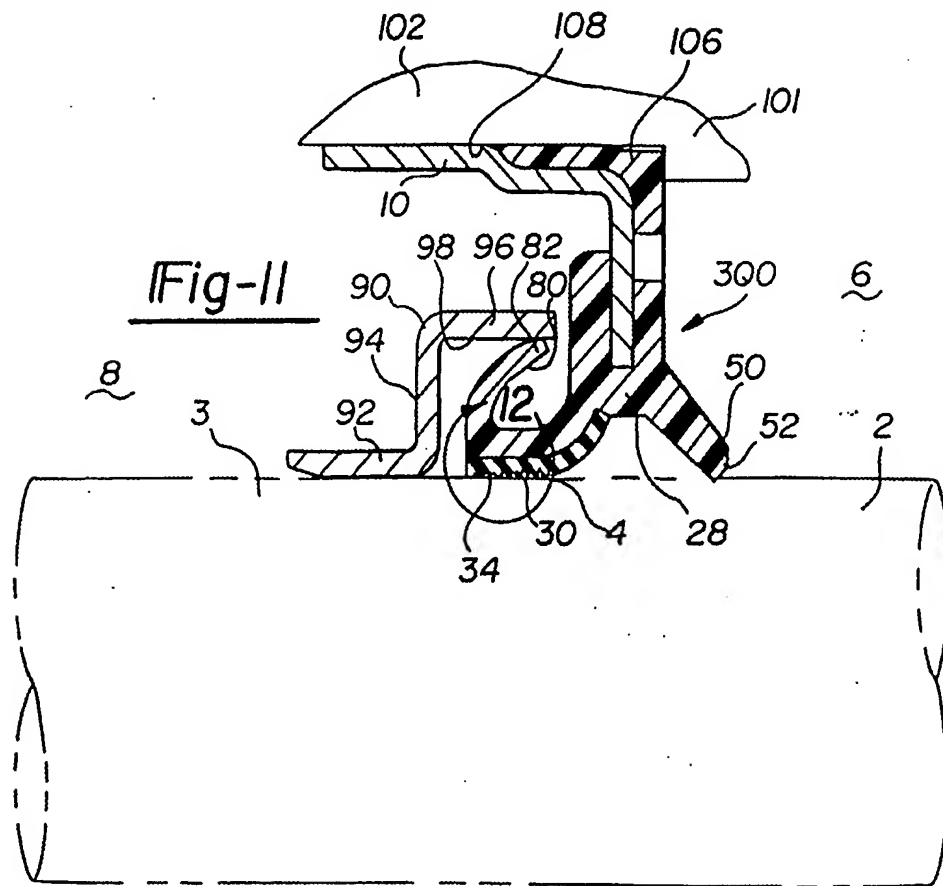
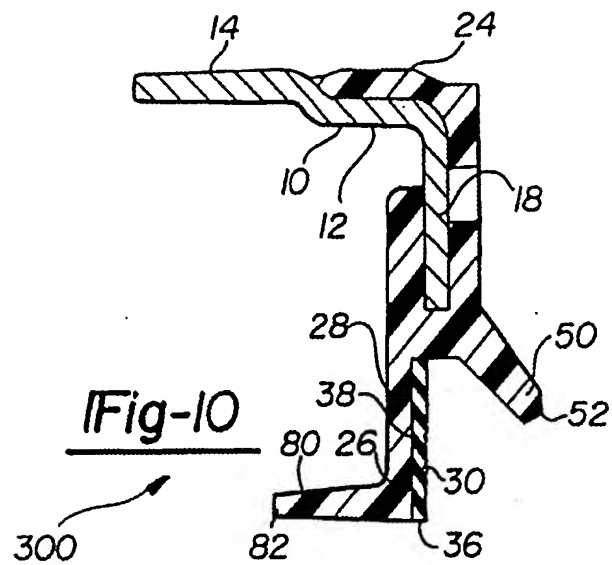
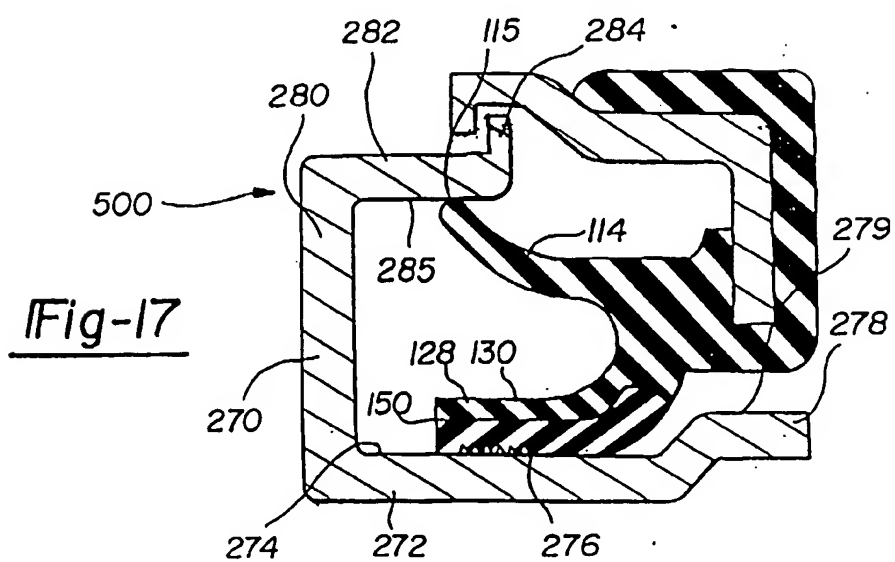
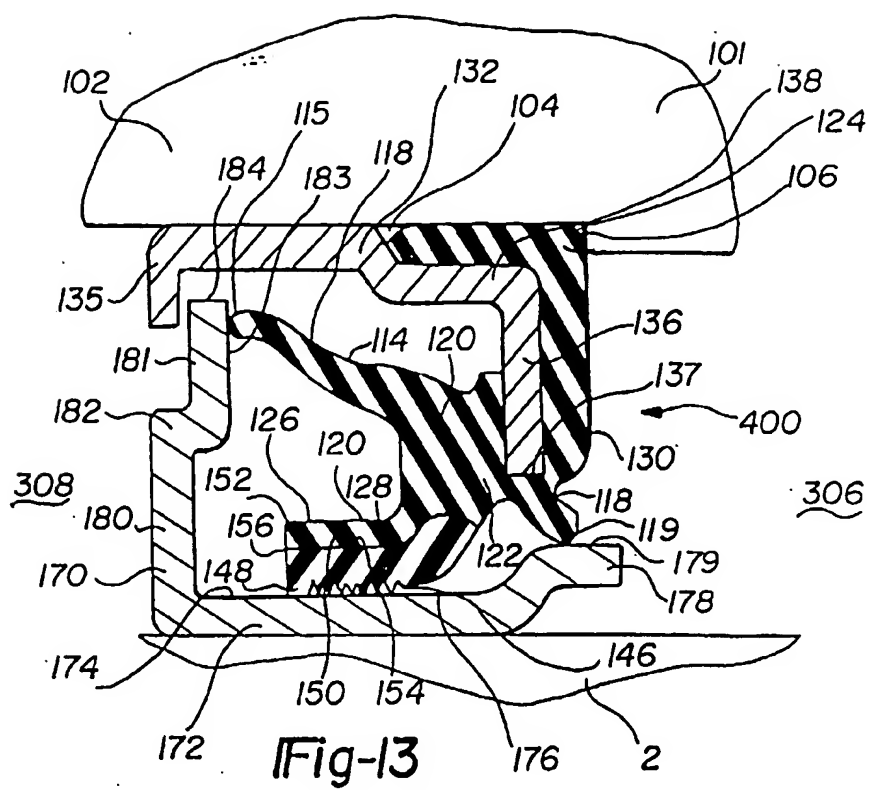


Fig-8



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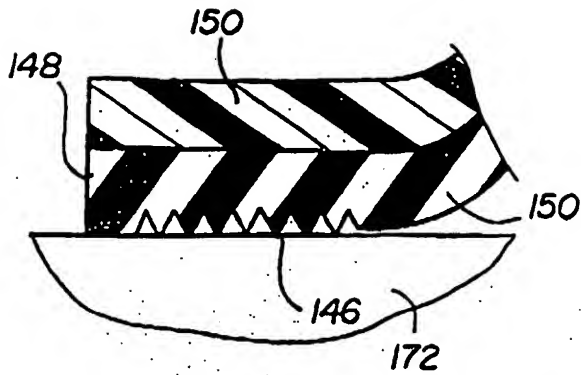


Fig-14

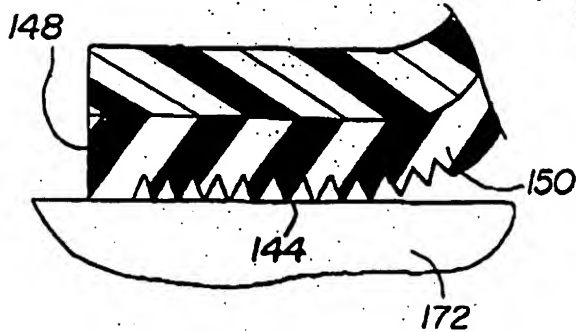


Fig-15

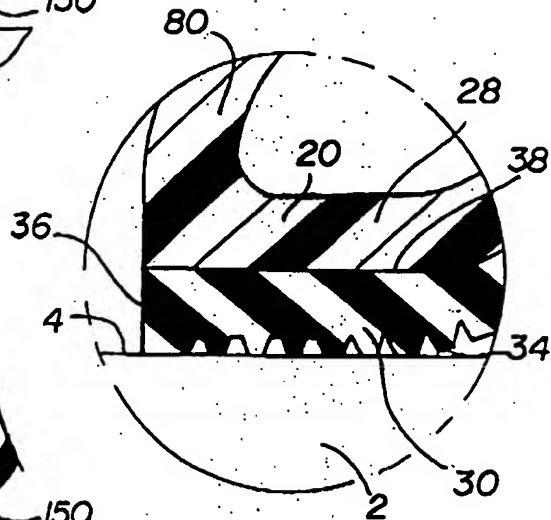


Fig-12

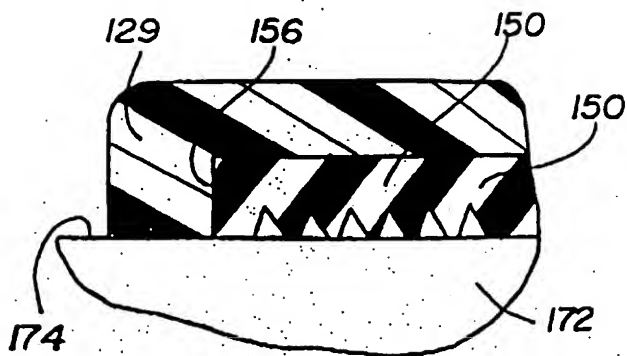


Fig-16

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